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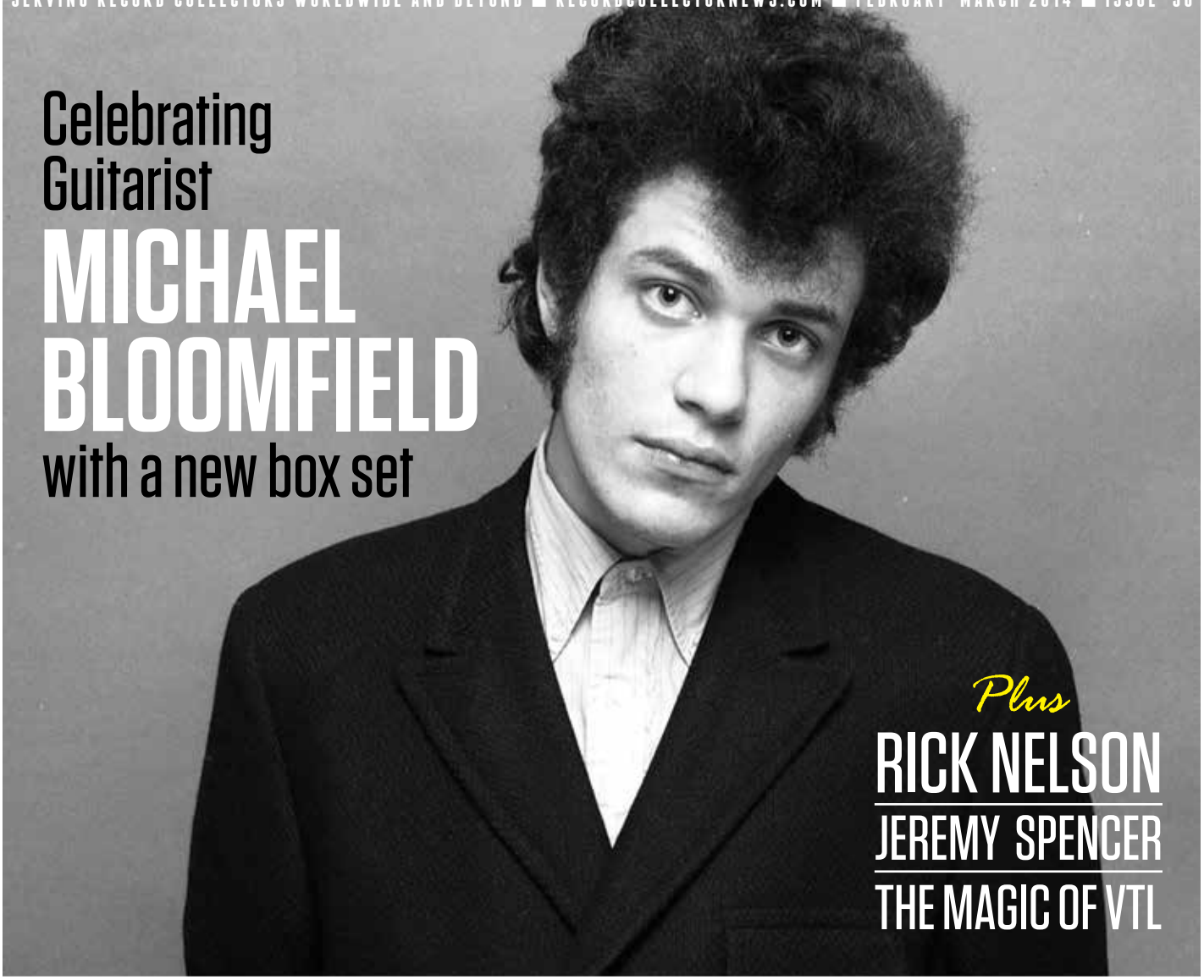

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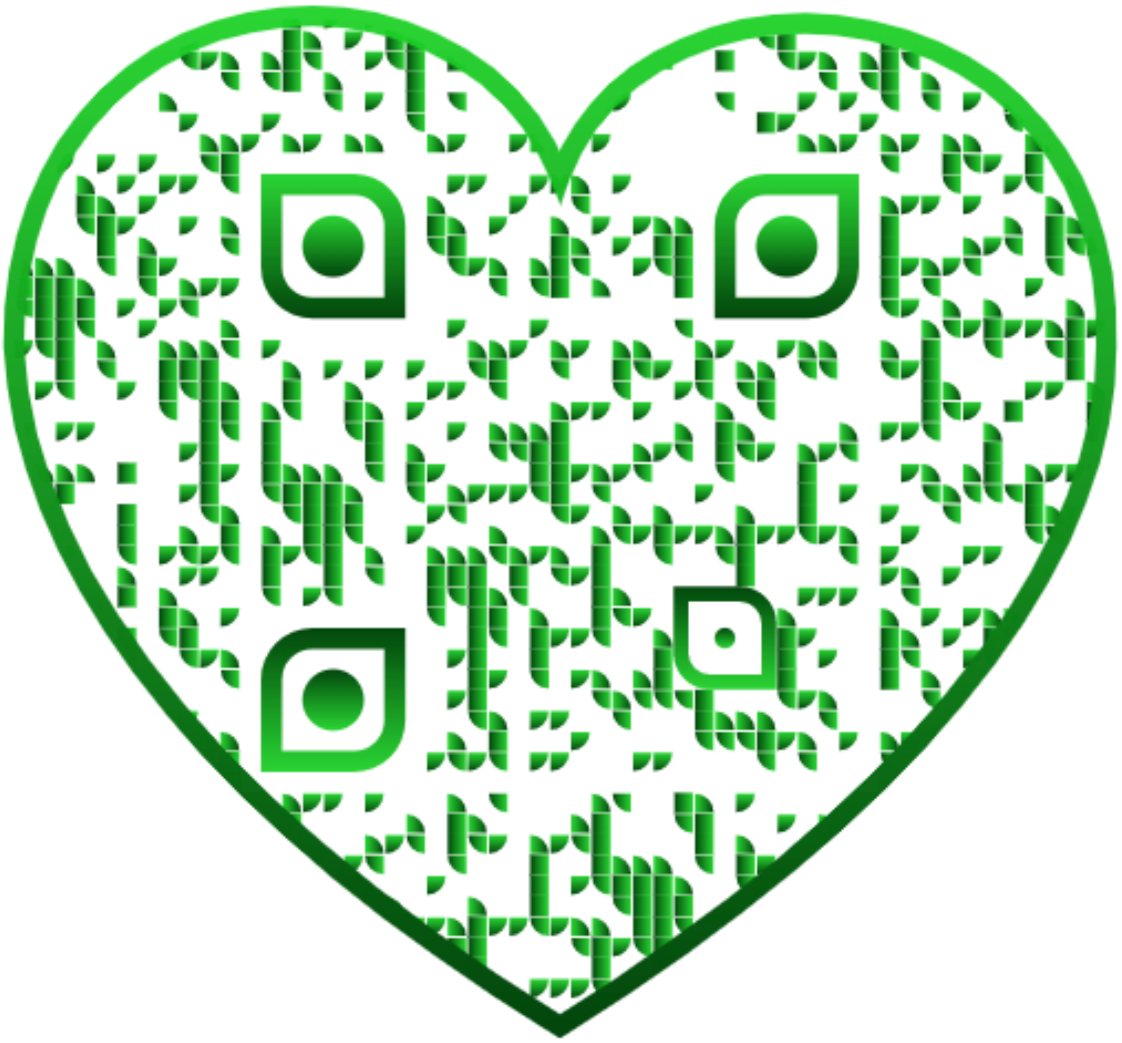

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"There's a bit of magic in everything, and some loss to even things out."
— Lou Reed

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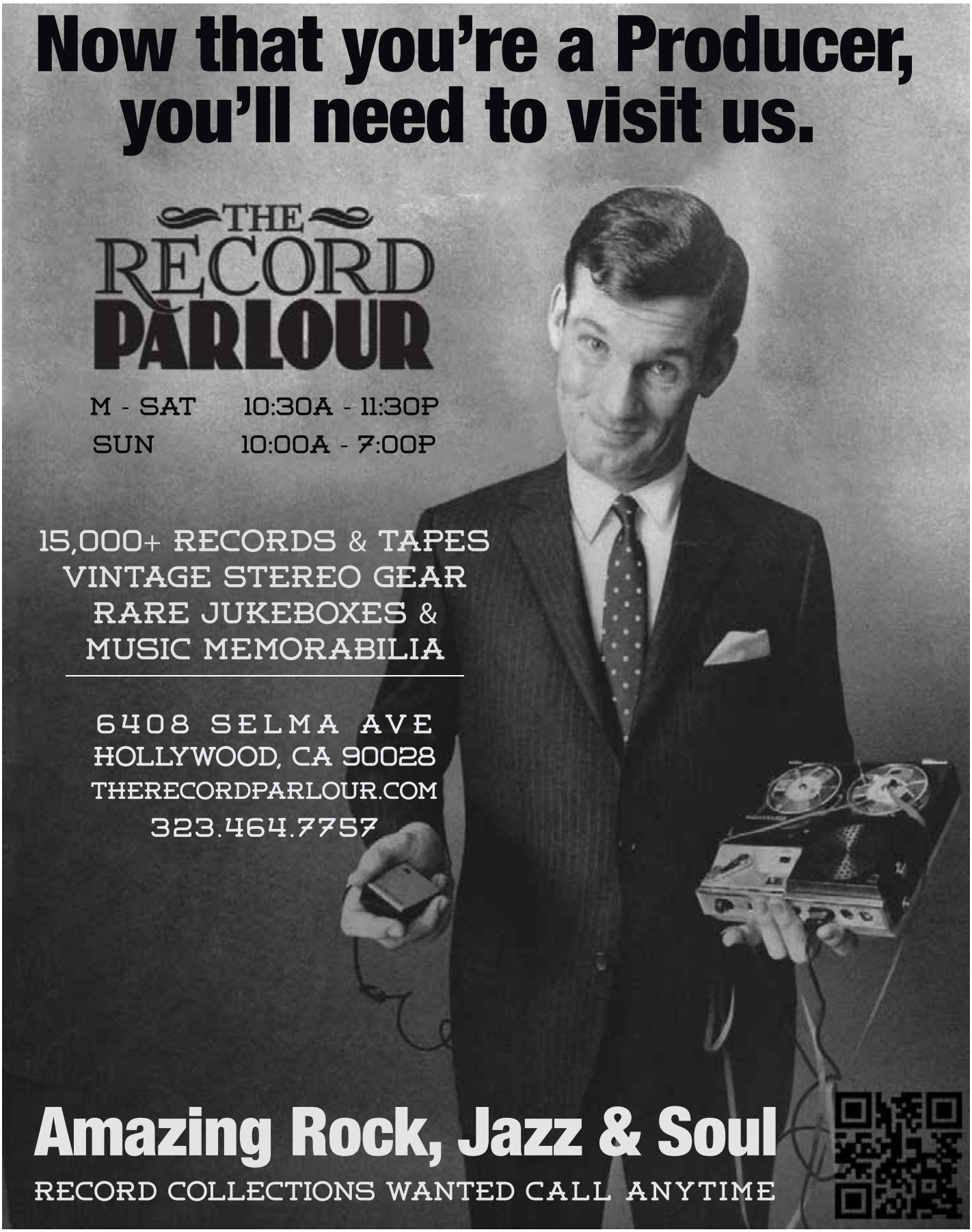

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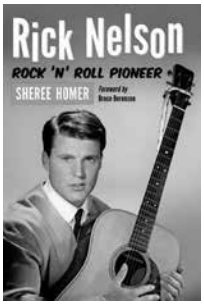
BOOKS

Rick Nelson

BY NEAL SKOK

AT THE END OF THE 1950's, Ricky Nelson was one of the most popular teen idols in the world. Born in 1940, Nelson debuted at age eight on the family radio sitcom *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. By 1952, the show was on television and Nelson was becoming well known. Nelson cut "I'm Walkin'," featured it on the television show, and scored a Top Five smash — and his musical career took off like a rocket.



Sheree Homer has written a balanced, analytical biography of Nelson and she leaves few stones unturned. She makes no apology for being a Nelson fan, yet she is objective and accurate.

Nelson's father, Ozzie, led his own orchestra — starting in 1930 — and was quite successful. He had a number one record and was also popular in films, television and radio. He was also intelligent and strategic in the entertainment industry — the perfect person to guide his son's career.

Rick Nelson, Rock 'N' Roll Pioneer skillfully negotiates Nelson's initial popularity and follows his career's twists and turns. As an adolescent, he was a music fan. Playing drums, clarinet and guitar. His musical influences were Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles and Elvis Presley. He often stated that he was attempting to replicate Perkins with his own music.

As we've seen throughout rock 'n' roll's history, television is the best way to promote. With the ongoing television show, Nelson had the perfect advertising medium. He also had quite an ear for music. He hired guitarist James Burton in 1957 and other top-flight players like Glen Campbell and Leon Russell. Nelson got so popular, that each TV episode featured him and his band doing a few songs. The formula worked well from 1957 thru 1961. Nelson had 14 Top Ten *Billboard* songs.

There have been other books about Rick Nelson, (who dropped the "y" at 21) but Homer's is in a class by itself. She interviewed major players in his life who speak openly and candidly. Over 40 people are quoted and music industry luminaries such as Sonny Curtis, Jimmie Haskell, Jerry Fuller and John Boylan have fascinating insights and memories. Nelson's wife, Kristin, was also involved and the book includes photos from her personal collection.

Homer makes a convincing argument that Nelson's music is the beginning of the country rock genre and certainly acts like Poco, The Eagles, John Fogerty and the Beatles have mentioned his influence. Nelson was very prolific in the recording studio — up until his untimely death in 1985 — and he left lots of quality music behind.

Homer is passionate about Rick Nelson and knowledgeable about early rock 'n' roll. These qualities come through in her biography. Even Rick Nelson scholars will find plenty in her book. Let's hope Homer has more projects in the pipeline. RCN

Rick Nelson, Rock 'n' Roll Pioneer
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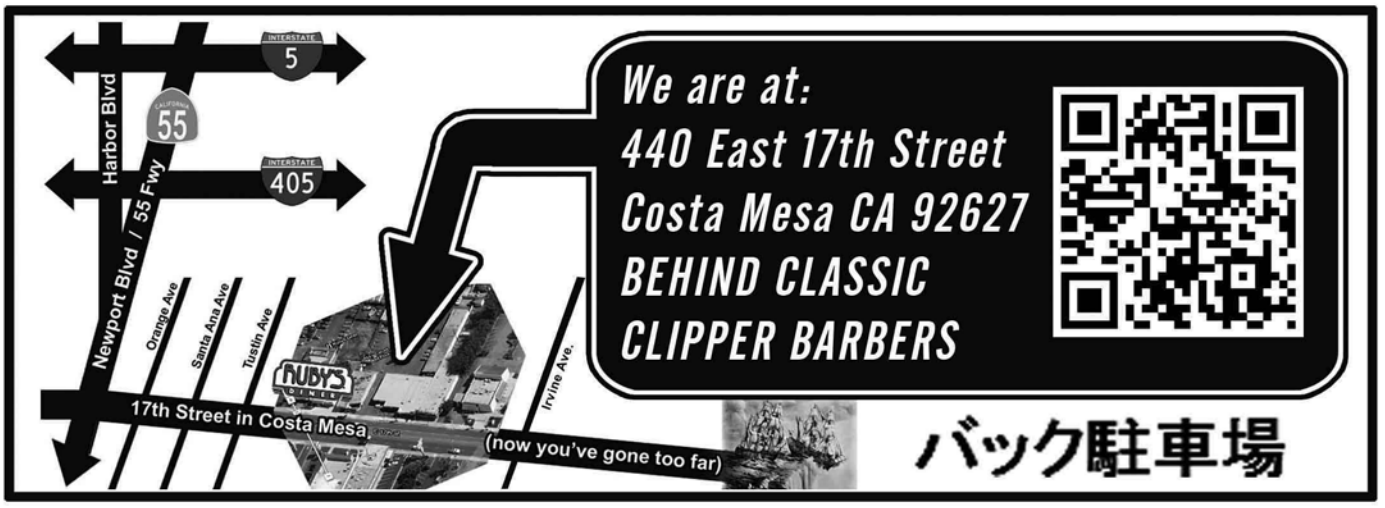

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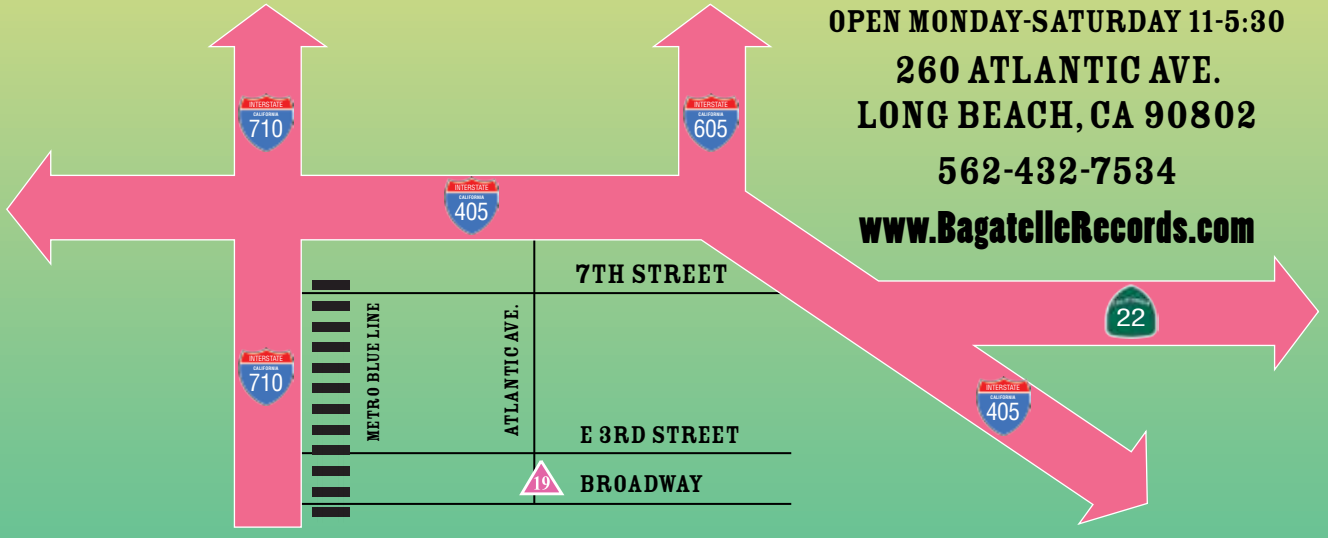

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Michael Bloomfield

Legacy Recordings Celebrates the Legendary Guitarist with *From His Head To His Heart To His Hands*

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

LEGACY RECORDINGS, THE CATALOG division of Sony Music Entertainment for February will release *From His Head To His Heart To His Hands*, a career-spanning 3CD/1DVD box set anthology chronicling the music of Michael Bloomfield. The collection also premieres *Sweet Blues: A Film about Michael Bloomfield* directed by Bob Sarles

Produced and curated by Al Kooper (who played with Mike Bloomfield on Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* sessions in 1965 and the *Super Session* album in 1968), From *His Head to His Heart to His Hands* houses a wealth of previously unreleased tracks — including Bloomfield's first demos for John Hammond Sr. in 1964 and his final public performance, concluding with a track from the 1980 Bob Dylan concert in San Francisco — alongside essential key recordings, both live and studio, from his all-too-brief life and career.

The anthology collates solo material, work with ensembles including the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and the Electric Flag, tracks with Muddy Waters and Janis Joplin, Highway 61 band outtakes and more.

Director Bob Sarles' *From His Head to His Heart to His Hands Sweet Blues: A Film about Michael Bloomfield* documentary combines vintage audio interviews and live performance footage of Bloomfield with newly lensed reflections on Bloomfield from the guitarist's friends and fellow musicians.

The box includes a 40-page booklet displaying a gallery of terrific photos covering the various phases of Mike's extraordinary career and extensive liner notes by musician, *MOJO* contributor, and lifelong Bloomfield fan Michael Simmons.

Born in Chicago in 1943, Mike Bloomfield learned blues guitar as a teenager hanging out in the clubs of the South Side, where he "played with every living musician who played electric blues" in real time with masters like B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Big Joe Williams and many more) from 1959 into the early 1960s.

A blues artist, Bloomfield was a prodigy who assimilated jazz and a plethora of global rhythms into his fluid improvisations. As a final cog in the wheel of the original Paul Butterfield Blues Band, one of rock's first interracial bands and an example of the blue's first experimental ensembles, Michael Bloomfield helped open new vistas of cultural and musical possibilities in 1965-66.

Bloomfield, who'd been signed in 1964 by legendary A&R man John Hammond Sr., was called into duty as a session guitarist for Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* album. The results, particularly the single "Like a Rolling Stone," took AM rock radio in a whole new direction.

"Best guitar player I ever heard" — Bob Dylan.

Mike Bloomfield went to work on the Butterfield Band's psychedelic blues masterpiece, *East-West* (1966), a landmark recording combining elements of blues, jazz, psychedelia, Eastern music and more.

"The future of rock guitar was in *East-West*. At one point or another you're hearing what would become the Grateful Dead, Santana, the Allman Brothers, Crazy Horse, Television and the Tedeschi Trucks Band." — Dave Alvin

In 1968, Bloomfield founded the Electric Flag, an experimental soul band with horns. That same year, he sat in for the *Grape Jam* disc in Moby Grape's sophomore double album and collaborated with Al Kooper on the platinum-selling *Super Session* LP.

"The first time I saw Michael play guitar... it literally changed my life enough for me to say, 'this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.'" — Carlos Santana

From 1968-69, Bloomfield would continue to release innovative, guitar-heavy works, including his debut solo album *It's Not Killing Me* and *My Labors* with Electric Flag member Nick Gravenites. Bloomfield's career was later highlighted by session work including Muddy Waters' Fathers and Sons and Janis Joplin's solo debut *I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama!* As well as recorded sit-ins with Woody Herman and Tracy Nelson.

"I became a Bloomfield fan when I was a 10-year old Beatlemaniac in 1965 and my best friend's 16-year old brother played us the first Butterfield album with Michael on lead guitar," remembers music journalist Michael Simmons. "I was astonished by his fleet fingers, his ringin'-a-bell tone, his ferocious attack. I dug Electric Flag's debut, but it was *Super Session* with Michael and Al Kooper that sent me over the top. The A-side of that album with Bloomers is still one of my fave rock recordings of all time. It's got chops, improvisation, intelligence, soul — things I've found lacking in a lotta rock for the last 40 years.

"I spent about 8 months researching and writing the liner notes for the box set — only three months past the deadline! — during which time I fully immersed in Bloomfieldiana and interviewed dozens of family, friends, musicians and archivists" Simmons explains. "Like all genii, Michael was one-of-a-kind. Several friends call him the most intelligent person they've ever known, he was completely committed

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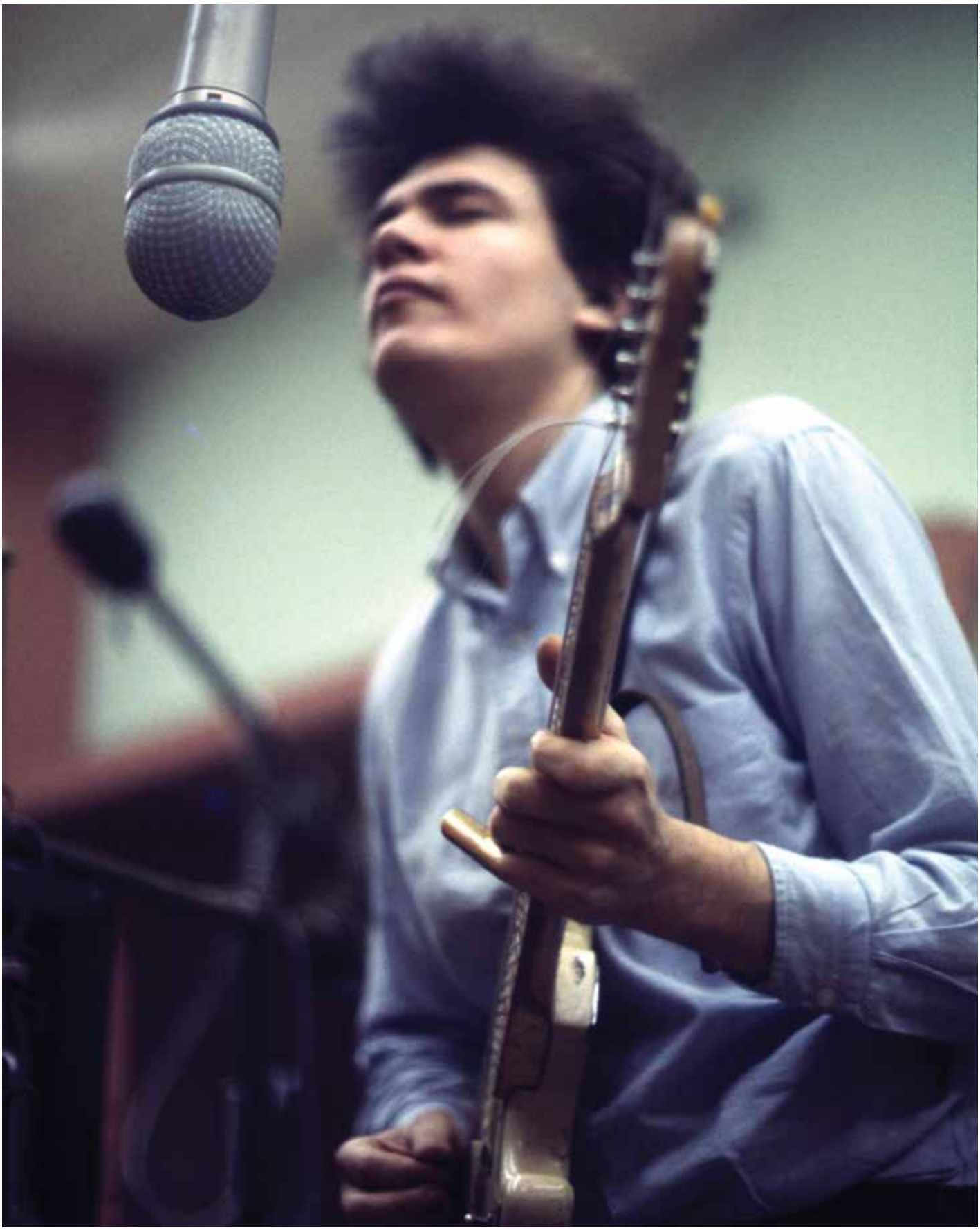

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continued

to making music for art's sake and not for commerce, and he thought for himself. He was hysterically funny, generous to a fault, human and imperfect and undependable and a fantasist, and the first guitar god of '60s rock. While he influenced every rock and blues guitarist who followed, no one sounds exactly like him and I can't say that about many of his peers. Plus he was a nice Jewish boy, which warms the pastrami of my Yiddishe heart."

AL KOOPER INTERVIEW

Q: Tell me about your initial encounter with Michael Bloomfield?

A. Well, Michael and I met on the "Like a Rolling Stone" session. I had read about him in *Sing Out* magazine, and saw a picture of him where he looked a little more rotund then he was when I met him. His brother says he was a fat kid growing up. So we met on the 'Like A Rolling Stone' session and really hit it off. So we played together on that.

Q. He blew your mind, didn't he?

A. Oh, absolutely! I was supposed to play guitar on that record. I packed up my guitar when I heard him warming up.

MIKE SHEA / SONY ARCHIVES

Bloomfield, Chicago, 1964.

It never occurred to me that somebody my age, and my religion could play the guitar like that. That was only reserved for other people. It never even occurred to me that that was an option for someone my age and my color. I had never seen that, or heard that up to that day.

Q. And you brought bassist Harvey Brooks into that session as well.

A. That's right. So, that pretty much ended my guitar playing by and large. I said, 'well OK, he's as old as me and he can play like that. I'm never gonna be able to play like that. Thank you, goodbye.' And, you know, I ended up playing organ on that record, and then I became a keyboard player really that day. So, it was a damn good thing because, you know, that was competition I couldn't deal with.

Q: You knew Tom Wilson who produced the "Like a Rolling Stone" date and was working with Bob Dylan. I know you used to lift Bob Dylan acetates out of Tom's office.

A. I did. I was a bad boy. Tom was sort of a spectator sport producer. He didn't do all that much. He'd put you in the studio and got the job done. He didn't interfere in anything. At least when I worked with him.

"Tom earlier worked for Savoy Records. He was a very bright guy. He was like 'what's happening man?' That kind of

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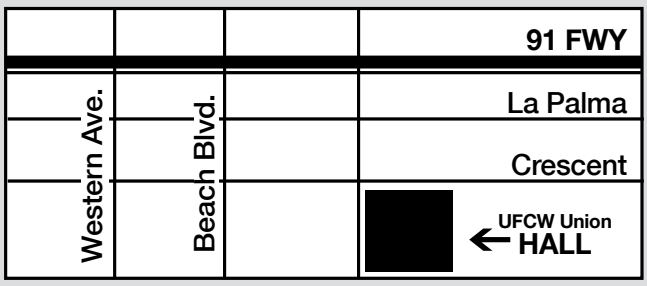

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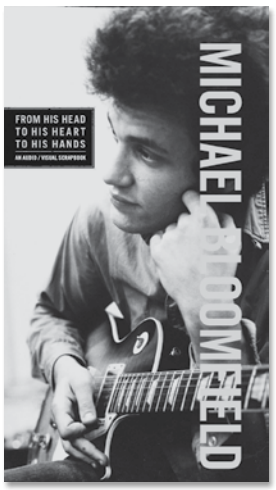
guy. But you knew he was bright and he talked about very erudite things, and he really saved my life that day on that Dylan "Like a Rolling Stone" session. Because, he could have...I went to him and said, 'Man, let me play the organ.' They had just moved Paul Griffin from the organ to the piano. And I went over to Tom Wilson, and I was invited just to watch, you know, and I said, "Man, why don't you let me play the organ, I got a great part for this.' Which was bull shit. I had nothing. And he said, Man...You're not an organ player...' And then they came to him and said, 'phone call for you Tom.' And he just went and got the phone. And I went in to the studio and sat down at the organ. He didn't say no. He just said I wasn't an organ player. OK.

"On the *Highway 61* Interactive CD put out a few years ago, they have the multiple takes of 'Like a Rolling Stone,' and on there you can hear Tom Wilson, 'OK. This is take 7. Hey! What are you doing in there?' Then you hear me laughing, and that was the moment he could have just thrown me out and rightfully so. And you know what? He didn't. And that was it. That was the beginning of my career. Right then and there. That studio dialog is documented. Wilson is the guy who invited me to the session first of all, which is really nice. You didn't get invited to Bob Dylan sessions, you know, especially if you were a nobody like I was. And there it was. There was the chance he had to toss me, and it would have reflected back on him because he had invited me to the session.



Q: On that "Like a Rolling Stone" date, was there a reason why you "played behind the runner" on the track? The organ follows the Dylan vocal.

A: No I did that because I was waiting to see what chord they were going to do. There was no music or lead sheet, or anything. I was just playing by ear and I didn't want to be the one making a mistake because I was doin' like a rebel run there. But anyway, we played together on that session, and the rest of the (*Highway 61*) album.

Q: On this new Mike Bloomfield anthology you assembled a different mix of "Like a Rolling Stone."

A: I took the Dylan's voice off the master tape and put the backing track on and re-mixed it. You know, in 'Like a Rolling Stone' there are three things that I made louder than they were: The piano, because that guy, (Paul Griffin) was so brilliant. So the piano is louder in the parts that he plays amazing things. And the thing that is really eye-opening about it are the drums are louder. And you hear some things you've never heard before.

"Besides Michael's playing you can really hear the drums of Bobby Gregg. I had all the tapes transferred to digital. I didn't want to touch those tapes. There's a version of 'Tombstone Blues' with the Chambers Brothers singing. I remixed that.

Q: You got to know Bloomfield in 1965 and '66 in New York.

A: I joined The Blues Project. He was in Paul Butterfield's band. Two blues bands. And we both left the blues bands to start horn bands, which we were both kicked out of again. The horn bands that we started. Very amazing parallel in our careers. Starting from the day that we met. So it seemed to me,

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DON HUNSTEIN / ©SONY ARCHIVES

Bob Dylan and Bloomfield at Columbia Recording Studios, New York, 1965.

"Like a Rolling Stone."

Q. You caught Bloomfield play many times with Paul Butterfield.

A. Yeah! He ended my guitar playing I'm tellin' ya. Both of us had just played on that *Grape Jam* album. So that sort of gave me the inspiration to say, "Why don't we make a record." I wanted to make a record with Bloomfield, and I wanted to make a record that was a very simple, basic record, not a 'weighty' record. So inspired by the *Grape Jam* thing, I said, "let's make a rock 'n' roll record based on the way jazz records are made. You pick a leader, or two leaders, and then you just go in, you pick some songs, you pick sidemen, and you just blow. No rehearsing or anything. You just go in and blow." So I said "I don't want to make a jazz record." And I was very dissatisfied with the way he was recorded up to that point.

Q. Your Super Session production gave us a chance to really hear Michael Bloomfield in a studio setting.

A. His live playing was like 300 times better than performance on a record to that point. In my opinion. So, what I wanted to do was put him in a situation where he was uncluttered by his career and uncluttered by his situation

continued

in hindsight, looking at that, when I started producing at CBS, that we should make a record together. We were like destined to do something together. Now this whole time we had been friends since we met. I'd go visit him when I was in his town.

Q: You were an A&R man and staff producer at Columbia Records in 1967 .

A: I came to Columbia Records in 1967 after the June Monterey International Pop Festival where I had been assistant stage manager. I assembled BS&T and joined the label as a staff producer. I brought BS&T to Columbia.

"John Hammond staff producer at Columbia and my office was next door to Hammond. We became very good friends. We spent time together and it was very unusual for him to do that. He would play me stuff. He would talk to me about music. And I was friends with his son. He loved that I was there and that I had long hair and that I wasn't like the rest of them at the label. That's why we got along. After he signed (Bob) Dylan he was second-guessed. Some called it 'Hammond's Folly.' Then in 1965

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continued

in the recording studio, which must have inhibited him.

"So I made it as uncomplicated as possible for him. Because that was the goal of the sessions for me, was to get amazing playing out of him like I heard him do on stage. And I felt really vindicated that I had done that. And that's what I wanted. I did what I set out to do.

"And, the other thing was, we both had been kicked out of the bands, and then Stills, too. He was out of his band (Buffalo Springfield). So Stills fit in, in a really weird way. Because none of us had anything at stake and that was the whole point of that record. There was no career thing goin' on. We just did it because we played music. That's what's so wonderful about that. Super Session wasn't made to sell records. It was just made like those jazz records were made for Blue Note, except it wasn't "Blue Note" kind of music.

"I had no expectations for that record. I mean just none whatsoever. I just did it because I had a job as a producer and I had no one to produce, and I went in because I thought Michael and I should make a record together, because how our careers were parallel. And also because we were friends, and it would be fun to work together. Michael brought Eddie Hoh (drummer) in, and I brought Harvey in (bass). I said, "you pick the drummer, I'll pick the bass player." Again, sort of like a Blue Note concept.

"The most im-portant thing is the playing of the two principals, Bloomfield and Stills. It's timeless. Bloomfield's stuff is some of the greatest blues playing that there ever was.

"Mike Bloom-field is music on two legs." – Eric Clapton.

"Mike Bloomfield was an all-star guitarist," offers MsMusic label owner and Foothill Records operator, Carol Schofield.

"His guitar (s) sang... the long smooth notes wafted through the air... He had a lot of feeling when he played. His love for music was on display. Soul and heart. And he was such a caring person that he taught music in Marin County. I also had the opportunity to be at his funeral memorial on Geary Street. He is one of the great music icons and spirits of our music generation. He and Al Kooper complimented each other completely." RCN

Los Angeles native Harvey Kubernik has been an active music journalist for over 40 years and the author of 5 books, including This Is Rebel Music (2002) and Hollywood Shack Job: Rock Music In Film and on Your Screen (2004) published by the University of New Mexico Press.

In 2009 Kubernik wrote the critically acclaimed Canyon of Dreams: The Magic and the Music of Laurel Canyon, published by Sterling, a division of Barnes and Noble. In summer 2012, the title was published in a paperback edition.

Otherworld Cottage Industries during February 2014 will publish Kubernik's It Was Fifty Years Ago Today: The Beatles Invade America and Hollywood.

In April 2014, Harvey Kubernik's Turn Up the Radio! Rock, Pop and Roll in Los Angeles 1956-1972 will be published by Santa Monica Press.

In fall of 2014, Palazzo Editions will publish Leonard Cohen: Everybody Knows, a coffee-table-volume with narrative and oral history by Harvey Kubernik.

This century Harvey penned the liner notes to the CD re-releases of Carole King's Tapestry, Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish," the Elvis Presley '68 Comeback Special and the Ramones' End of the Century.

He is the Contributing Editor of Record Collector news.

In 2013, Kubernik was seen on the BBC-TV documentary on Bobby Womack, Across 110th Street, directed by James Meycock and lensed for the spring 2014 Neil Norman–directed documentary about the Seeds.

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Magical Logic

Bea Lam and Luke Manley are the "Ears" and "Brains" behind VTL

BY DAVID THOMSON

BORING. THAT'S THE term Bea Lam, Luke Manley's better half at VTL, uses to describe her experience when listening to dull stereo components that don't connect her to the music.

Bea likes tubes. That's why, back in the early 90s, she went to hear Luke deliver the Vacuum Tube Logic demonstration at a San Francisco dealer. An attractive woman who appreciates hi-end audio? Luke was immediately smitten.

Bea was so impressed she bought the system. With Luke, even with his jovial cajoling, it took a little longer for her to succumb to his warm, sweet sound similar to that of his audio components.

They are both so passionate about music, it seems that they were destined to not only meet but, marry. This year, they'll celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary.

Today, Bea's contribution to that warm, sweet sound — of the VTLs, that is — is ever evolving. Although, bestowed with many responsibilities at VTL, primarily, she is the ears of the company. "I listen to the dynamic range. Has it a warm, creamy sound? Is it luminescent?"

Luke is the brain that coordinates the production process to include Bea's suggestions and translating their practical implementation with the VTL engineers.

Then, all the components are assembled right here in Southern California. They ship about 50 pieces a week.

Luke Manley and Bea Lam of VTL

Bea, an electronic engineer, and Luke know that charts and graphs tell a lot about sound values. They also know that nothing compares to the human computer.

"Our ears are the best filter," stated Luke. "Our, typical, VTL customer isn't really interested in what's in the "box." All they care about is the end result. They're also suspicious of too much circuitry," he laughed.

To Bea, as a classically trained pianist, fidelity is fundamental. When 12 years old, in Taiwan, she was exposed to the symphonic experience. First, she was inspired to reproduce the pianist's performance. Today, she wants to reproduce the piano. Neither is easy.

The piano, with its expansive dynamic range, is widely heralded as the most difficult musical instrument for audio components to replicate. It will truly test your stereo system.

Actually, Bea thinks the pipe organ is the most difficult...in fact, damn near impossible. Her hearing is so acute that the only way she can truly appreciate its dense, pulsating emanations is live.

"Of course," Bea admited, "When testing any component, you must play a piano piece to evaluate it. Also, the female voice; It offers so many subtleties and delicate layers of intricacy that VTL strives to portray as 'live.'"

Luke believes that the VTL listener wants live, too: "They go to concerts. When they get home, and they lay their vinyl on the platter, they want to recreate that same sonic experience...and accuracy. They expect the sound of the instrument to be as true to real as possible." It seems that's the VTL mission: Either it's true or it's trash...or it's torture.

And, there are so many great musicians that the only way we get to hear them today is, thankfully, through recordings. And, those recordings are being reissued in 200-gram vinyl mastered from the original magnetic tapes. These records reveal information that wasn't so clearly available to us — if we have the components to reproduce them.

The typical VTL listener is indentured in a high-stress environment all day long. "In the evening, they want to decompress." claimed Luke, "And What better way than music?"

And, many of those listeners have devolved from the CD revolution back to vinyl. They have never parted with their treasured records acquired in the pre-CD era.

They also have appreciated that the CD (supposed) replicas can't come close to the sonic accuracy, or warmth, of those original records.

"In this day and age, any serious system must include a phono stage," declared Luke.

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Luke was more than happy

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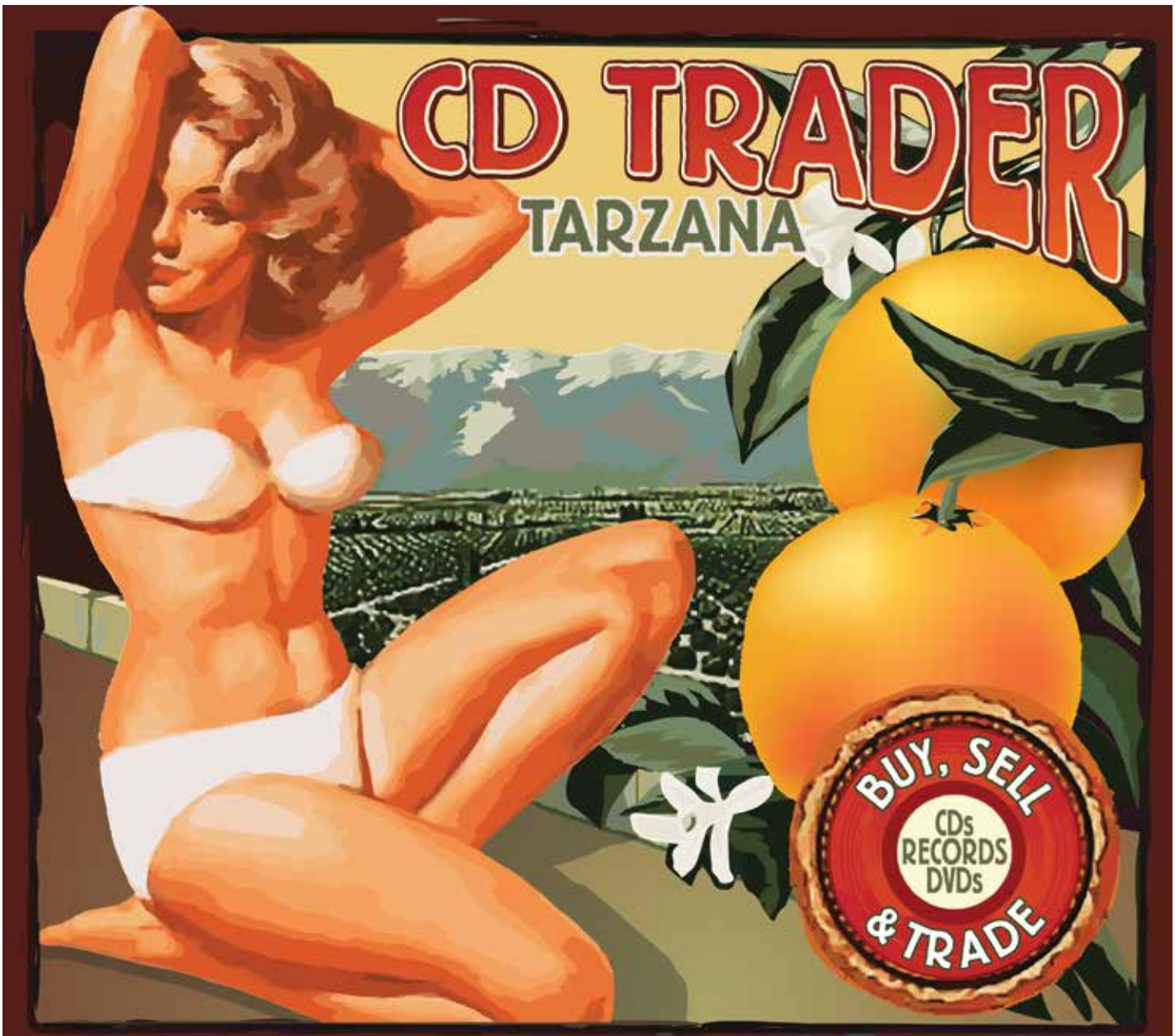

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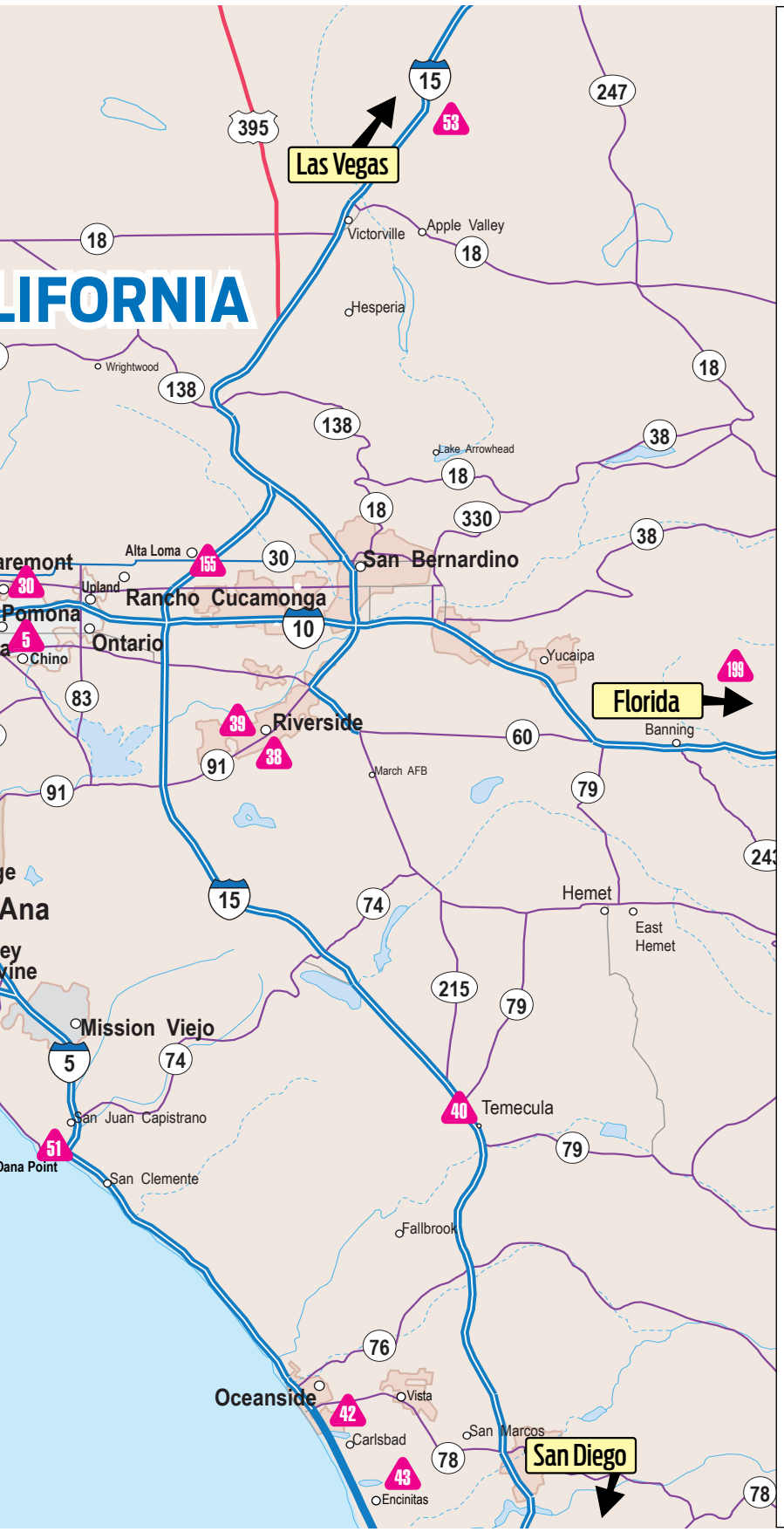

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71	Zoinks Records	226 S Main St	Pomona	91766
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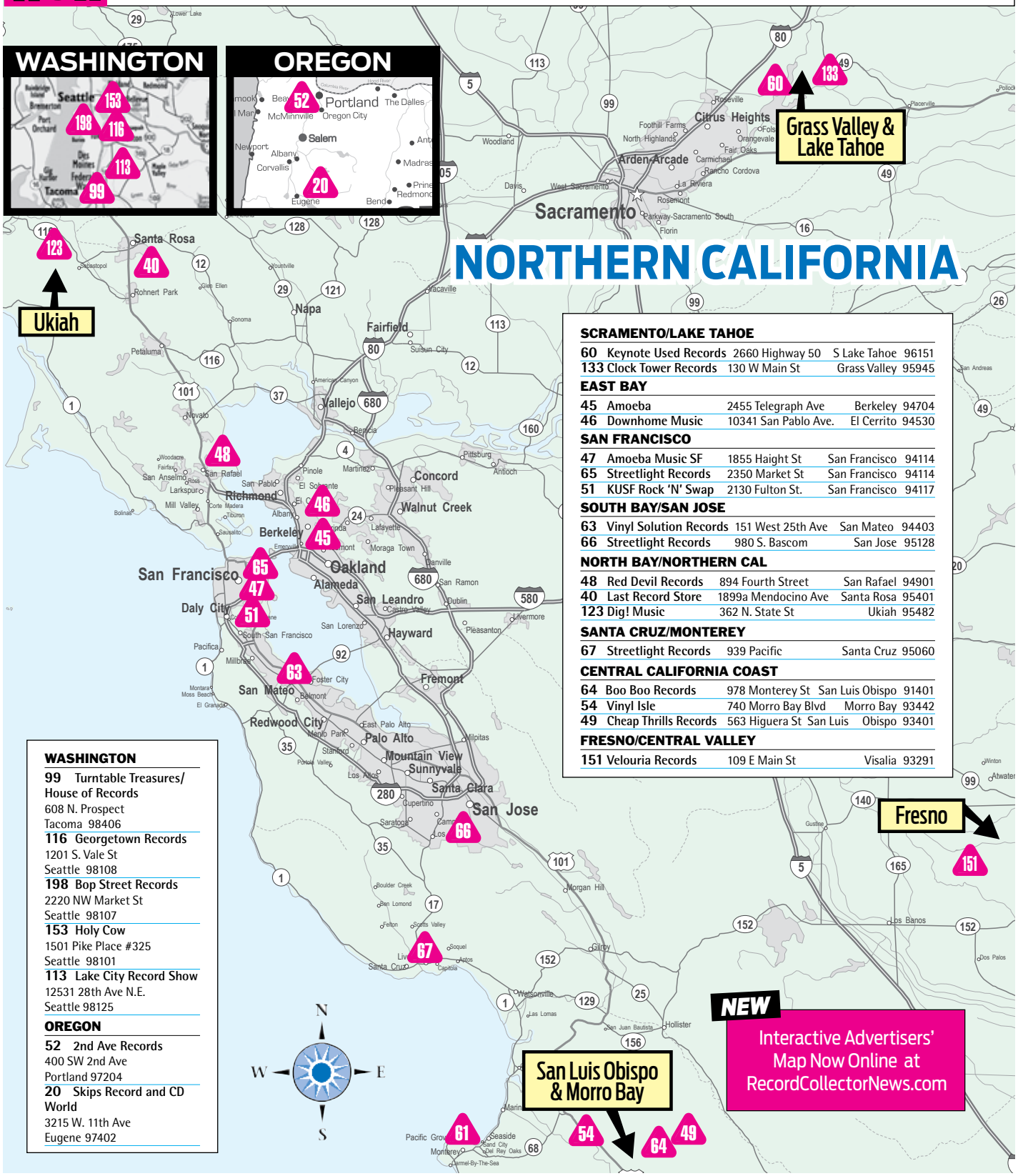

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47	Amoeba Music SF	1855 Haight St	San Francisco	94114
65	Streetlight Records	2350 Market St	San Francisco	94114
51	KUSF Rock 'N' Swap	2130 Fulton St.	San Francisco	94117

SOUTH BAY/SAN JOSE

63	Vinyl Solution Records	151 West 25th Ave	San Mateo	94403
66	Streetlight Records	980 S. Bascom	San Jose	95128

NORTH BAY/NORTHERN CAL

48	Red Devil Records	894 Fourth Street	San Rafael	94901
40	Last Record Store	1899a Mendocino Ave	Santa Rosa	95401
123	Dig! Music	362 N. State St	Ukiah	95482

SANTA CRUZ/MONTEREY

67	Streetlight Records	939 Pacific	Santa Cruz	95060

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST

64	Boo Boo Records	978 Monterey St	San Luis Obispo	91401
54	Vinyl Isle	740 Morro Bay Blvd	Morro Bay	93442
49	Cheap Thrills Records	563 Higuera St	San Luis Obispo	93401

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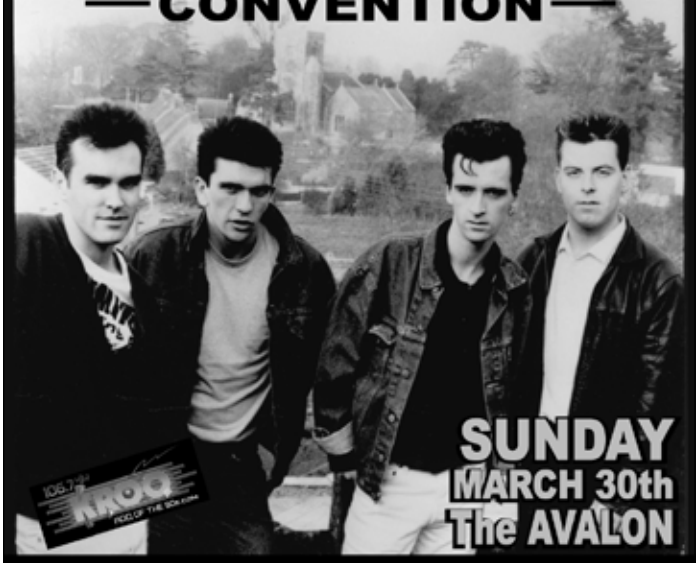
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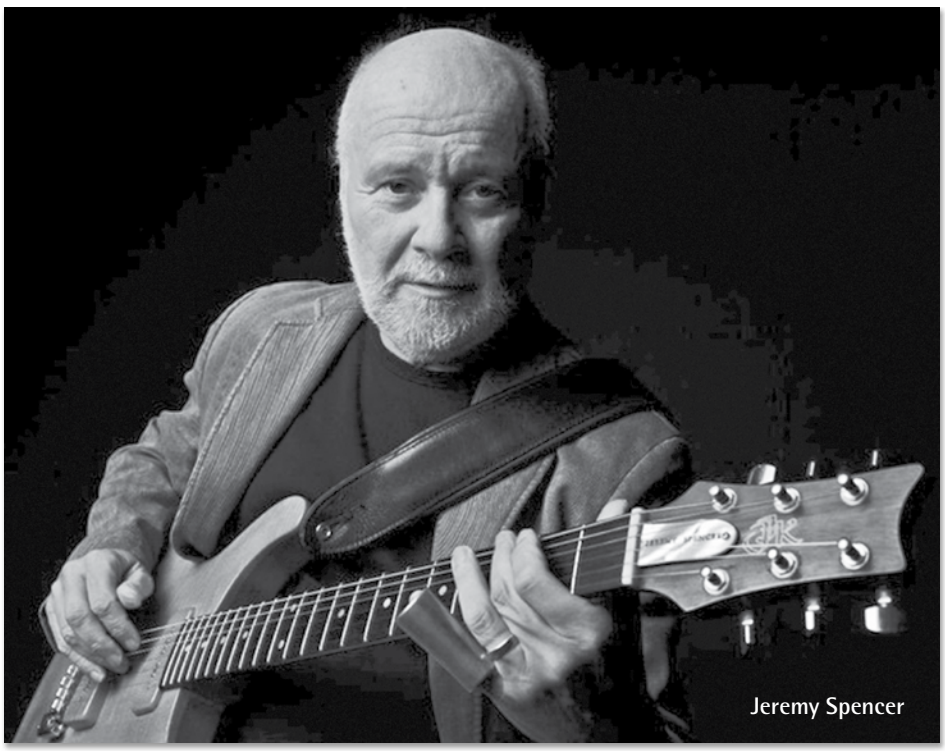
Jeremy Spencer Returns

The Original Fleetwood Mac Bluesman is back with a new album and tour

BY SAM EPSTEIN


Jeremy Spencer

THE LAST TIME JEREMY SPENCER was scheduled to play with Fleetwood Mac at the Whiskey in 1971 is the stuff of legend. He stepped out for a smoke before the show and disappeared, leaving his bandmates in the lurch. A few days later they found him living with a religious commune, seemingly destined to be little more than a rock history footnote.

As Spencer told Bill Wasserzieher in a wide-ranging, 2006 interview (rocksbackpages.com), "I was merely filling the role of being a showman, but with unoriginal material and parodying, which pretty much became just mimicking Elvis in a gold lamé suit. This was very unsatisfying, to say the least. I can't say it enough, that the lack of creative inspiration for me was devastating. It was practically killing me, along with my questions about life and what was I living for. Nothing seemed to have any purpose. I really did feel like Solomon, that 'all is vanity,' although I'd gotten to that point at only 22 years old. And bottom line, I just didn't enjoy playing anymore."

He resurfaced with a pair of sporadic releases, Columbia's 1972 Jeremy Spencer and The Children and Atlantic Record's 1978 Flee; both offhandedly dismissed, as they didn't resemble Jeremy Spencer — the blues hero of yore. Then nothing.

In 1998, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame welcomed two versions of Fleetwood Mac into its ranks: One the famous Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, John McVie lineup, and their celebrity romantic interplay played out in song. Their 1977 album *Rumours* stayed on the pop charts for 134 weeks. The other, earlier version of Fleetwood Mac began life in 1967and barely lasted into the 1970s before guitarists Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, and Danny Kirwan left, one by one, each suffering from some combination of mental, spiritual, and emotional breakdowns. One group epitomized mega-selling '70s and '80s rock; the other were Britain's most authentic blues band with a succession of wondrous records: "Black Magic Woman," "Oh Well," "Albatross," "The Green Manalishi," "Man of The World," "Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked In Tonight" and the album *Then Play On*. Both shared the name Fleetwood Mac, but only the rhythm section of Mick Fleetwood and John McVie linked the two. At the Hall of Fame that night both Fleetwood Macs were represented. Jeremy Spencer could have been onstage too, but he wasn't. He was half a world away in India, playing charity benefits for the blind.

The message that Jeremy is alive and extremely well came in 2006 with the release of *Precious Little* on Blind Pig. Like a bolt from the blue his resurrection upended the "What ever happened to?" theorizers and astonished critics, pundits and bloggers:

"*Precious Little* ranks as a near perfect comeback record by a master musician who has a unerring feel for the blues. Filled with subtle shadings, beautiful playing, a deeply emotional feel and nary a trace of rock excess, Spencer proves he's a bluesman of the highest order" – Jeff Harris, *Bad Dog Blues*.

"All of Spencer's trademark elements are intact on Precious Little: the earnest, boyish tenor, the silky slide work, the spirited Chicago blues and Memphis rockabilly..." – *Uncut*.

"Spencer sounds both confident and relaxed throughout this set of parlor blues, and his slide guitar is nothing less than virtuosic" - *No Depression*.

"In recent years," he told Wasserzieher, "I felt I just wanted something to be out there for those that are interested, an album that I was musically happy with and that was representative of me now, with no pressure of opinions, preconceived ideas of how I should be 'marketed,' and trends...

"It did take some courage just to do it, regardless of what I imagined people would expect of me in terms of a "comeback" style — you know, big, flashy, and screaming. "Come on, Jer, give us the ol' piss-takes and 'Shake Your Moneymaker'." I wanted it

small, simple, and uncluttered. Collectively, including the engineers, it seemed we were always unconsciously thinking small, tasteful. If there was anything I wanted to prove, it was that I could do just that and have a listenable product that the public and even I would enjoy."

In 2010, Spencer followed up with a limited edition, double vinyl album for International Record Store Day emblematically entitled: *Bend In the Road*. It was a result of a suggestion to team up with a young band of Fleetwood enthusiasts. The musical chemistry was instant and inspiring. So much so that 32 diverse tracks were laid down creating an album that moves confidently from blues to Americana to rootsy pop. The Elmore James and Buddy Holly influences and impeccable blues and rock renderings remain intact and vibrant.

Making a full-blown return now, and with visa in hand, Jeremy has just announced an ambitious D.I.Y February and March U.S. tour in support of both the critically acclaimed *Bend in the Road* and forthcoming *Coventry Blue* release. Coventry

Jeremy Spencer, 1971

by embracing crowd funding by launching a Kickstarter campaign to generate tour seed money, fund the new CD and connect directly with fans.

Kickstarter supporters will be eligible to receive previously un-released tracks, autographed CDs, vinyl, posters, original artwork, attend slide guitar workshops, meet and greets, even private concerts. A members-only Tour Club has been created that will provide exclusive live video and audio performances from the tour.

Spencer, 1970

Except for a few brief U.S. appearances in 2006 and 2010, 43 years have passed since Jeremy last toured here with Fleetwood Mac in 1971. He is still arguably the foremost Elmore James stylist alive. Bar none.

Blue boldly extends his musical sweep, furthering his creative exploration with his blues roots undercurrent. Considering his career output, this marks an especially prolific and courageous period for Spencer with two albums released in just two years and mounting of support tour. For the latter, he has Spencer taken a bold step

His tour band will include Brett Lucas (Bettye Lavette), as well as Brill Building alum, Northern Soul legend and left-handed upside-down guitarist, singer-songwriter Evie Sands. Welcome back! RCN

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San Diego: Spanish for Heavy Psych?

BY LANCE BARRESI

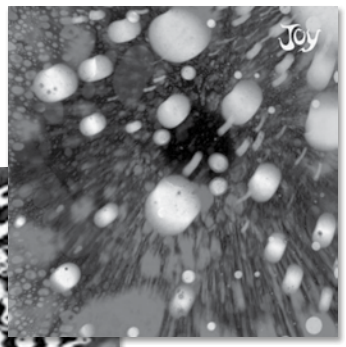
EVER FEEL LIKE BANDS that get tagged with the PSYCH descriptor just aren't very psychedelic? Or heavy? Or any good at all? Well, have I got news for you! There's a whole scene of HEAVY PSYCH bands happening down in San Diego right now worthy of that tag, and then some. These bands are the real deal. Pop-psych geeks with atrophied ears might wanna go ahead and insert their earplugs now. The San Diego Psych scene is raging full on, borderline metal-style. But this ain't metal proper we're talking here. These bands are living in the land of heaviest of heavy stoner rock, where guitar solos reign supreme, mid-to-up tempo rhythm sections lay down solid foundations that can withstand

quakes way up there on the Richter Scale, and vocals, when there are any, are so reverberated and buried in the mix that they only serve as a reminder that this music is being played by real humans, not high-tech robots from a psychedelic galaxy far, far away.

San Diego is a beautiful beach city complete with some awesome music venues. **The Casbah** is a legendary downtown club that's hosted shows almost every night of the week for 25 years. **The Soda Bar** and **Che Café** regularly host rad shows and **Bar Pink** is the place to go if you're looking for a mellower night out, unless somebody like Thee Oh Sees are playing there of course. (I once watched Endless Summer with live Hawaiian Slack-key guitar accompaniment at Bar Pink: pure bliss.) And there are loads of other cool spots as well. San Diego is also home to some fantastic record stores. My favorites are **Record City** and M-Theory. Unfortunately, one of San Diego's best record stores, **Thirsty Moon**, recently went out of business. Thirsty Moon, named after the obscure '70s Krautrock band, was started by Earthless' rhythm section back in 2005. The store was impeccably curated and carried, almost exclusively, esoteric Psych, Krautrock, Garage, and Punk reissues. Their stock in the Soul, Jazz, Funk, and International genres was limited, but quality. Again, mostly reissues and new records, but nothing but the best and most far out. The store was tiny and went for a quality over quantity strategy, which was rad for customers who didn't wanna get their fingers dirty, but I think they were a little ahead of their time for San Diego, and without the margin benefit from selling loads of more common used records, Thirsty Moon must've had a tough time of it. However, like many of the most influential underground artists from the past, their legacy lives on. I imagine most of the members of the San Diego Psych bands shopped at Thirsty Moon, and got turned on to a lot

of incredibly rad records. And obviously, Earthless was already hip to some far out sounds.

Earthless has been around the block. This POWER trio formed in 2001, but didn't release their first record *Sonic Prayer* until 2005. Even then, it went widely unappreciated, partially because it came out on Gravity Records, a label better known for releasing post-hardcore sounds from San Diego. Many of the Gravity bands sounded nothing like Earthless and have not aged nearly as gracefully. *Sonic Prayer* however, can already be classified as a classic 21st century Heavy Psych record. The LP is comprised of two side-long instrumental jams cheekily



titled "Flower Travelin' Man" and "Lost In The Cold Sun." Fans of Japanese Psych and *Dark Shadows* will recognize the blatant references. Over the years, *Sonic Prayer* has been repressed on wax again and again, and I'm sure as become one of Gravity's best sellers. Then again, maybe not. As incredible as these sounds are, the record's heaviness is chest cavity crushing and the majority our ADD addled society might not be able to sit down long enough to take it all in. Earthless returned in 2007 with their second LP *Rhythms From A Cosmic Sky*, this time on the more genre appropriate Tee Pee label. *Rhythms* was, and still is, one of my favorite records from 2007. The hype sticker on the front

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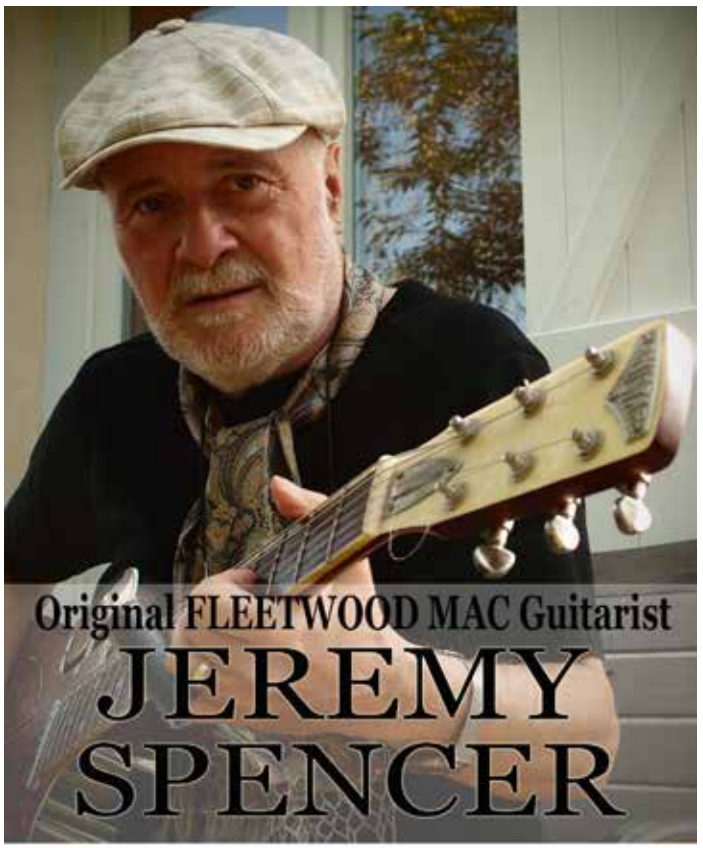

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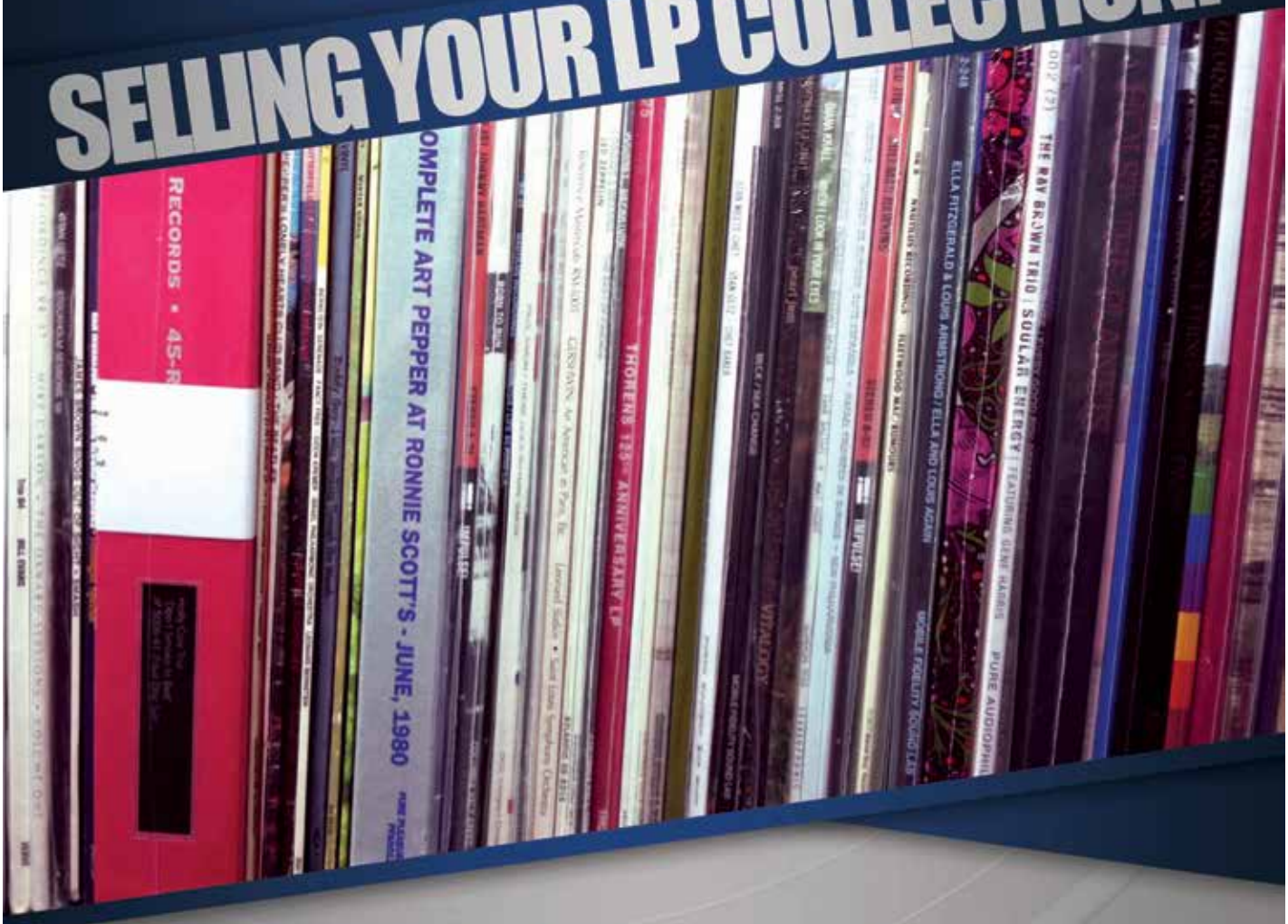
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of the jacket aptly proclaims "Their Tee Pee Records debut displays a plodding, jam-heavy, guitar freakout, with bass throb echoing everyone from Jimi Hendrix to Flower Traveling Band (sic), to Hawkwind." Not on the LP, but included on the CD version of *Rhythms* is Earthless' spot-on cover of the Groundhogs' classic "Cherry Red."This is also the only place you'll find vocals on an Earthless record. This record is basically a two-side long jammer, the A-side being divided into a five-part suite. I saw the band in Chicago on the *Rhythms* tour and the experience was absolutely mind-blowing.

Tragically, Earthless left us high-and-dry aside from a few random split releases and live recordings for the following six years, but 2013 brought Earthless' triumphant return on Tee Pee in the form of a massive double LP entitled *From The Ages*.The band picks up right where they left off, again only inhibited by the length of a side of 12" vinyl. These guys are the seemingly at the height of their abilities, but continue to amaze with the endless amount fuel in their tanks. Not that it matters much, because Earthless' tunes speak for themselves, but among the members of band are alumni of Nebula, Hot Snakes, Rocket from the Crypt and a current member of OFF!

The last time I saw Earthless was at the Casbah, with LA favorites Zig Zags. My pals and I toked a joint on the walk from the car to the venue and upon entering were stunned by the noise coming from the stage. The band drew us in like a white light and pummeled us into submission. The bass from the kick drum felt like it was punching me in the chest and the guitar was endlessly ripping. The experience was so intense, that I had to back up from the stage for a moment and get my feet on the ground and grab a pint. I stepped back up to the stage for the finale, but to be honest the whole set felt like a grand finale.

Once the band was revved up, there was absolutely no slowing down. I discovered afterwards that these dudes were the ones billed as **Harsh Toke**, which was surprising because their set was more intense than the jams I'd on their Bandcamp page... which also blew me away. I dug it so much that I immediately got in touch with the band and asked them to do a record on Permanent. Much to my dismay, they'd already worked out a record deal with, you guessed it, Tee Pee Records. Their debut LP came out late last year and it's just as good as I hoped it would be. The vibe is very similar to Earthless' but there's a bit more variety in the instrumentation and some heavily effected vocals. The tracks are also slightly shorter, two jams per side instead of just one. It's definitely one of the best records of 2013, Psych or otherwise.

Joy is another Heavy Psych band from San Diego making waves. They self-released an LP back in 2012 and the local label, Under The Gun, pressed it to cassette tape shortly thereafter. Both formats are out-of-print, but the tunes are available digitally at joycurestheblues.bandcamp.com. Joy is a bit more blues-based than their aforementioned compadres, but they take the blues about as far out as they can stretch 'em and they're far more psychedelic than a band like Blue Cheer ever was, even in their most lysergic moments. That said, Joy may be the most accessible of these bands and might be a good gateway drug for the timid. Live, however, I'm sure earplugs would still be required.

For more on the San Diego Psych scene, keep your eyes peeled on the future output on Under The Gun Records. Evert seems to have his finger on the pulse and has plans to release the best of the best. Hope you don't mind tapes. RCN

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Thelonious Monk Returns to Paris

BY ARMAND LEWIS

THERE ARE VERY FEW JAZZ composers who, when you hear their work, you know instantly whose tune you are hearing. Soloists may be easily identified by their individual sound or style, but as composers, very few are so unique that their songs are not only instantly identifiable, but should any one try to copy their approach, they invariably fail to equal their original inspiration. You may hear tunes that remind you of the flash of Charlie Parker, or the studied cool of Miles Davis, but there is only one Thelonious Monk.

Born in North Carolina in 1917, Thelonious Sphere Monk began his career while he was a teenager, playing piano with a traveling evangelist touring the southern and mid-western United States. By 1941, Monk was the house pianist at Minton's Playhouse, a Harlem nightclub where up-and-coming musicians would not only entertain, but after hours would jam, creating a new sound that would in few years become known as modern jazz or bebop.

While bop was developing, Monk played with, learned from and influenced a large number of the musicians who are credited with originating the style. Along with Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and others, Monk helped develop the lightning fast, highly precise and musically dexterous sound that characterized modern music of the time. Eventually, Monk grew tired of playing fast and decided he would slow down.

Monk had also started composing his own music. By the time of his first recordings – done for Blue Note in 1947 — Monk had written most of the compositions that he would ultimately write, including his most famous tune, he jazz standard "Round Midnight." Monk's angular, dissonant, melodically original and sometimes down right somber compositions were often met with bewilderment and occasionally literal hostility. So much so, that in reviewing Monk's first Paris appearance in 1954, critics wrote that Monk was "weird" and had "made a fool of himself." The audience that evening apparently felt the same way.

Simply put, Thelonious Monk's music was too advanced for audiences of the late 1940s and early '50s. But later on, what had begun as incomprehensible and strange suddenly started to make musical sense. By the later 1950s, the world began to understand what he was doing. Acceptance and recognition of his work quickly followed. By the early '60s, Monk was not only signed to a major label (Columbia), but was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine!

Touring also became much more musically rewarding. With his quartet featuring tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, Monk toured the world multiple

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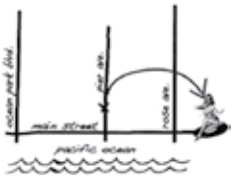

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times to great acclaim wherever he played — including a return to Paris in 1969. This time, Monk was received as a major star and the concert was considered an important event — at the very theater where, 15 years earlier, he was practically booed off stage.

This triumphant 1969 concert has finally been released on both audio and video. *Thelonious Monk – Paris 1969* (Blue Note CD B001881902 or CD/DVD set B00 1882000) presents the entire concert as videotaped for French television during what would turn out to be among Monk's last years as a performer.

Kicking off with "I Mean You," Monk and tenor saxophonist Rouse play a very spirited rendition along with a hastily recruited rhythm section. Literally teenagers at the time, bassist Nate Hygelund and drummer Austin "Paris" Wright were recruited for this European tour when Monk's longtime bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley left the group for other gigs. No matter, as Hygelund and Wright both swing the way that Monk's music required.

Monk's classic "Straight No Chaser" is taken at a faster pace than on any other recording in memory. Noted for its quirky angular structure, the tune is played here as close to a straight bop rendition as can be imagined. Though the tune retains Monk's unique imprint, it is a surprising re-interpretation by its composer.

"Bright Mississippi" returns to the more familiar Monk pace. Introspective and slowly deliberate, each note is registered with determined purpose. As always with Monk, the space between the notes is every bit as important as the notes themselves and here Monk and Rouse literally duel with each other over the melody and structure of the composition.

"Epistrophy" rocks with powerful rolling propulsion — building from chorus to chorus as Rouse solos over Monk's up-tempo, driving piano. Again, Monk plays faster than one would expect from his earlier recorded versions. It's all the rhythm section can do just to keep up.

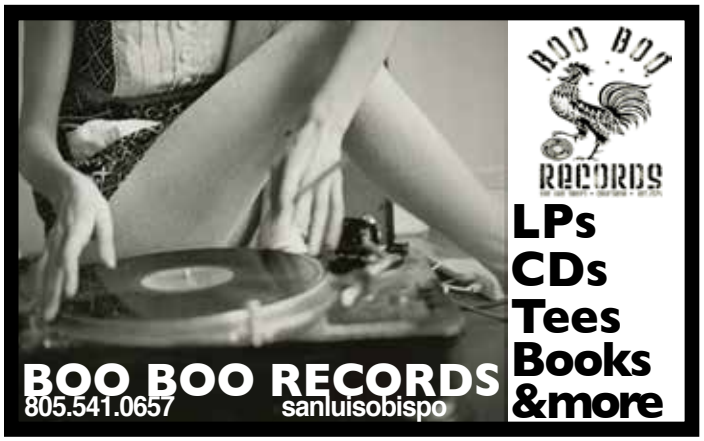
Outside of his work with Thelonious Monk, Charlie Rouse is not particularly well known and made relatively few records under his own leadership, but his unique tenor sound and expressiveness on this set — particularly on "Bright Mississippi" and "Nutty" — prove that fame is not an indication of talent.

This time, Monk was received as a major star and the concert was considered an important event.

"Nutty" also features an extended drum solo by guest drummer Philly Joe Jones. Watching backstage during the set, Monk called him to sit in on the tune. The veteran percussionist, who anchored Miles Davis' original quintet, kicks everything up several notches, inspiring both Monk and Rouse to respond with renewed energy and brilliance.

This concert tour was something of a last hurrah for Thelonious Monk, who in the coming months would slow down considerably as health problems began to increase. Within a couple years, Monk would stop performing altogether. He would leave a legacy of both compositions and recordings that would continue to grow in stature; almost all of them becoming classics. This concert (available also in a two LP vinyl edition) is an extremely important addition to that legacy. RCN

Armand Lewis buys and sells rare Jazz LPs. He can be reached at mrbluenote@peoplepc.com



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RCN RECORD SHOW CALENDAR

Calendar listings are free and printed on a space available basis. Unsolicited materials cannot be returned. Please contact conventions to verify the information! Send your calendar listings to Record Collector News: jim@recordcollectornews.com

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1

Pasadena, CA. Pasadena City College Flea Market and Record Swap. 1570 E Colorado Blvd. Pasadena. 8am-3pm. FREE admission. Parking $2

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8

Minneapolis, MN The Record Show Ballentine VFW, 2916 Lyndale Ave. $2. 9am-4pm. 651-224-4947

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 9

Claremont, CA. KSPC CD and Record Expo. Edmunds Ballroom, 170 E. 6th St. $2. 10am-4pm. 909-621-8157

Eugene, OR. 2014 Eugene Record Show. Eugene Hilton, 66 East 6th Ave. $3. 10am-5pm. 503-475-7377

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 15

Countryside, IL. Southwest Chicago Record and CD Show. Holiday Inn – Countryside – Lagrange 6201 Joliet RD. $3. 10am – 4pm. 847-409-9656

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16

San Francisco, CA. KUSF Rockin' Swap University of San Francisco. $3. 7am-4pm. 415-386-KUSF

New York, NY. The New York City Record and CD Show. 440 W. 57th St. $6. 10am–4pm. 973-209-6067

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 23

Buena Park, CA. Greater Orange County Record Show. UFCW Union Hall – 8530 Stanton Ave. $3. 10am-3pm. 626-665-4448

Seattle, WA. Lake City Record Show. Lake City Community Center 12531 28th Ave N.E. Free 10am-4pm. 206-850-1588

SATURDAY MARCH 1

Kelso, WA. Kelso – Longview Record Show. FOE Club 609 S. Pacific Avenue. $3. 5pm-9pm. 360-850-9323

SUNDAY MARCH 2

Pasadena, CA. Pasadena City College Flea Market and Record Swap. 1570 E Colorado Blvd. Pasadena. 8am-3pm. FREE admission. Parking $2

Brooklyn, NY The Collect-I-Bowl. Brooklyn Bowl, 61 Wythe Ave. Free. 12pm – 5pm. 516-306-4143

SATURDAY MARCH 15

New York, NY. The New York City Record and CD Show. 440 W. 57th St. $6. 10am–4pm. 973-209-6067

Grants Pass, OR. 9th annual Grants Pass Record Show. 1451 Fairgrounds Rd. $2. 9am–4pm. 541-245-6758

SUNDAY MARCH 16

Los Angeles, CA. Beat Swap Meet 6-Year Anniversary. Chinatown Central Plaza - 943 N Broadway, Los Angeles 90012. Free w/ canned good. 213-973-7927

Hillside Il. Chicagoland Record Collectors Show. Best Western 4400 Frontage Rd. $3. 9am-4pm. 630-989-1533

SUNDAY MARCH 23

Newark, CA. The Newark Music Swap Meet. 6430 Thornton Ave. $3.50 8:30am – 1pm. 408-263-5127

SATURDAY MARCH 29

Buena Park, CA. Greater Orange County Record Show. UFCW Union Hall – 8530 Stanton Ave. $3. 10am-3pm. 626-665-4448

Chicago, IL. The Beat Swap Meet #6. The Empty Bottle 1035 N Western Ave. $5. 12pm-5pm. 773-802-4457

SUNDAY APRIL 6

Pasadena, CA. Pasadena City College Flea Market and Record Swap. 1570 E Colorado Blvd. Pasadena. 8am-3pm. FREE admission. Parking $2

SUNDAY APRIL 13

Canby OR. Record Bonanza. Clackamas County Fairgrounds Main Pavilion Building Hwy 99E. 10am–4pm. $3. 503-651-2780

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